

Missouri Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal

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Missouri Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Renewal Application
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Project Summary

Missouri is applying for a \$8 million PDG B-5 renewal award for three years, totaling \$24 million. Missouri will use this award to make progress on the needs identified as part of the most recent needs assessment that identified the following needs:

- **Too few families have access to early childhood programs**, due to insufficient options for B-5 programs and services in their community and insufficient funding to support the early childhood workforce.
- **Missouri does not have a clear definition of quality** for all early childhood programs and services.
- **Local leaders are not supported to coordinate information and resources** for early childhood professionals and families in communities where they live and work.
- **Lack of near-real time data** to empower decision makers to find innovative solutions to increases access and scale high-quality services.

Missouri will leverage this grant opportunity to advance the following activities:

- **Improve statewide data infrastructure** by integrating child care subsidy and Kindergarten Entry Assessment information in the Early Childhood Integrated Data System.
- **Increase coordination and engagement opportunities for families** by developing a statewide strategy for coordinated enrollment and empowering childhood community leaders to better support and engage families at the local level, especially in rural communities.
- **Provide system-wide supports for the workforce** to continue to support early childhood scholarships and apprenticeships for child care, home visiting, and preschool teachers.
- **Supporting quality improvement, social-emotional development, and mental health**, including the expansion of professional development opportunities that support challenging behaviors, especially for professionals serving vulnerable populations.
- **Expanding the supply of child care in the state**, including an evaluation of the effects of child care relief funds and a pilot project for child care supply building activities in desert areas.

These efforts will support Missouri to achieve its ultimate vision that all children in the state are safe, healthy, and successful learners who enter kindergarten ready for success in school and in life.

Project Narrative

Expected Outcomes

In 2021, as a result of previous Preschool Development Grant B-5 (PDG B-5) funding, Missouri created the consolidated Office of Childhood (OOC) within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) through an executive order by Governor Parson. OOC now has nearly three years of experience unifying the state's mixed delivery system. OOC continues to rigorously collect data and work closely with diverse groups of stakeholders to implement solutions that target the greatest needs of children, families, and early childhood professionals. This PDG B-5 renewal opportunity will enable Missouri to address the most persistent challenges in the system, including challenges facing the early childhood workforce and access to early childhood programs. The activities described in this project narrative will strengthen Missouri's workforce, increase quality in early childhood programs, improve data collections, and support family engagement in key decisions about their children's care.

Missouri is committed to collecting system-wide qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the success of the activities described in this project narrative. The expected outcomes of this grant opportunity include: 1) expanded access to and supply of early childhood programs; 2) increased participation in the state's Quality Assurance Report (QAR); 3) improved early childhood workforce recruitment and retention; and 4) improved data collection. The ultimate expected outcome of this project is improved readiness for children entering kindergarten, which is Missouri's measure of success for the mixed delivery early childhood system, as indicated by a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) results.

Approach

Activity 1: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment

Background

Using PDG B-5 planning grant funds in 2019, Missouri completed a comprehensive statewide B-5 needs assessment¹ by analyzing available programmatic quantitative data alongside qualitative data collected through statewide listening sessions, interviews, and surveys of parents, early childhood professionals, and other stakeholders. Missouri’s Early Childhood State Advisory Council (ECSAC) is required by Executive Order to “conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality prekindergarten services for low-income children”. The Chair of the ECSAC is the Director of the Missouri Head Start State Collaboration Office, and the Missouri Office of Childhood (OOC) works closely with the director on Council meeting agendas and reporting on early childhood activities as required by the Council bylaws, such as needs assessment, strategic planning, school readiness, and other early childhood initiatives (see Figure 20 for a comprehensive list of ECSAC members). The 2019 needs assessment led to the creation of the unified OOC at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) by identifying the challenges and silos that resulted from implementing early childhood programs across three state agencies. Using the results from the 2019 needs assessment and an updated, targeted needs assessment in 2022, Missouri established the current strategic plan and vision for the B-5 system (see Activity 2 for more detail). Missouri plans to use this PDG B-5

¹ <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/pdg-needs-assessment-full-copy>

renewal award to conduct an updated comprehensive statewide B-5 needs assessment in 2025. In addition to engaging the ECSAC and the Head Start Collaboration Office during the needs assessment updates, with a consolidated office inside the state's education agency, OOC is able to easily consult the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) administrator, child care licensing, state home visiting, local education agencies administering prekindergarten, and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Part B/619 and Part C (First Steps) administrators all of whom work inside the same office (see Figure 15 for a comprehensive list of the programs consolidated into OOC).

Accomplishments

Missouri's most significant accomplishment to date is that Missouri now uses a three-year Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment and strategic planning process, developed as a previous PDG B-5 activity. This three-year cycle allows OOC to regularly assess the landscape of the early childhood system by collecting data on early childhood access, quality, and workforce, through a robust two-way engagement of diverse groups of stakeholders. This needs assessment process then informs Missouri's three-year strategic plan, which guides the early childhood strategies for the state.

Conducting the 2022 Targeted Needs Assessment

Missouri's most recent needs assessment, conducted in 2022, was a targeted follow-up analysis to the 2019 comprehensive needs assessment with a specific focus on child care capacity and home visiting services. The needs assessment revealed there were 379,570 children under five years old in Missouri, and only 164,809 child care slots. Therefore, at the time of the needs assessment, Missouri only had the capacity to serve 43% of the population and 89 out of 115 counties (77%) were identified as child care deserts. When considering working households with

young children, which is approximately 66% of households, there are still 50 out of 115 counties (43%) identified as child care deserts, for an estimated 279,216 children who would need care when both parents are working. In these cases, Missouri only has the capacity to serve 60% of the population needing child care. Additionally, in 2022, there were 53,813 children that received home visiting services from 11 home visiting agency types across the state. The 11 home visiting agency types in Missouri include the Missouri Parent Education Program, Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Programs, Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), and Title V Programs. These data illustrate the gaps in access and the critical locations and services where Missouri needs to focus efforts to enhance supply of and access to early childhood programs.

Facilitating Stakeholder Engagement

During the previous PDG B-5 grant period, Missouri worked to create authentic stakeholder engagement processes to ensure the experiences of stakeholders are embedded in decision-making and strategic planning. Based on recommendations from a 2021 report² developed in partnership with the Hunt Institute, the OOC established routine channels for ongoing stakeholder engagement on the needs assessment, strategic planning, and related initiatives. For example, during needs assessment and strategic planning efforts, OOC convened a strategic planning work group with key stakeholders that represent diverse sectors, perspectives, and backgrounds (e.g., advocacy organizations, home visiting and child care providers, business community, and policymakers. See Figure 19 for a comprehensive list of workgroup members).

² <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/early-childhood-and-afterschool-stakeholder-engagement-final-report-and-recommendations>

Currently, OOC hosts monthly webinars for early childhood professionals, families, and other interested parties such as policymakers, with an average of 141 live listeners each month. OOC also publishes a monthly newsletter that is distributed to an average of 12,800 stakeholders and parents, which provides updates, announcements, and opportunities for additional engagement in early childhood activities. OOC meets regularly with several stakeholder groups to address key topics such as workforce development, school readiness, child care, and kindergarten entry assessment. These discussions provide opportunities for OOC to gather input, propose policies, solicit feedback, and complete a feedback loop to share final decisions.

Current Challenges

Despite recent successes, Missouri has a long way to go in ensuring the state achieves its ultimate vision: that all children are safe, healthy, and successful learners when they enter kindergarten. In 2019, Missouri identified the following four key challenges (see Figure 1) that provided direction for the current strategic plan.³ Missouri has made strides in addressing these challenges, for example, OOC has developed a definition of quality that now informs all of its quality-related initiatives (see Activity 5 for more detail).

Figure 1: Missouri's Key Challenges

Access: Too few families have access to early childhood programs and services, as a result of both insufficient early childhood options and insufficient funding, which results in consequences to children's health, safety, and well-being, as well as preventing many Missouri caregivers from participating in the workforce. This lack of access is extremely acute in rural communities, for low-income families, and for infant and toddler care.
Quality: While an agreed upon definition of quality has been achieved, the definition is not used consistently across programs. Additionally, there are not enough supports for professionals to improve their quality or for families to make informed decisions for their children.
Community Leadership: Across the state, local leaders are not supported to coordinate information and resources for early childhood professionals and families in the communities where they live and work.
Data-Driven Solutions: There is a lack of near real-time data from key B-5 programs and services to empower decision makers to find innovative solutions to increase access and scale high-quality services.

³ <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/childhood-strategic-plan>

Lessons Learned

The biggest lesson learned related to conducting needs assessments has been the need to continue to create alignment across the various needs assessment processes in the state and strengthen two-way communication with stakeholders. Missouri has aligned the once-separate needs assessments across the B-5 programs administered by the OOC into a single needs assessment. Now the state needs to work towards building alignment with other key state partners who also conduct early childhood needs assessments, such as Early Head Start/Head Start, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, and Missouri Department of Mental Health. There is a need for incorporating health and mental health perspectives when conducting the early childhood needs assessment to ensure the whole child is represented. This can be done through ensuring health and well-being measures into the existing school readiness indicators and sharing data across programs that support mental health and health. With a better aligned needs assessment, Missouri will strengthen the unified vision it has for its system while reducing the duplication of efforts and incorporating common data elements.

Additionally, Missouri has established strong methods for one-way communication with stakeholders during the previous PDG B-5 grant. However, to better meet the needs of stakeholders, as identified in the Hunt Institute report, Missouri needs to examine methods to strengthen two-way communication with stakeholders. Missouri has learned that families need support like training to feel more comfortable participating and work to reduce barriers to participation in stakeholder engagement activities. Otherwise, it can often be difficult to get families to participate in needs assessment and stakeholder engagement activities. For Missouri, this can look like strengthening the regional Parent Advisory Council and Statewide Parent Advisory Council to serve as pipelines for family members who feel prepared to engage in

stakeholder activities at the state level. Finally, it is important that Missouri work to engage closely with the families served by IDEA Part B/619 and Part C (First Steps). Although both programs are part of OOC, Missouri can leverage even greater collaboration across these funding streams to include families of children with disabilities in the needs assessment process.

The updated 2025 comprehensive statewide B-5 needs assessment will provide more robust data points to inform strategic planning, Missouri currently collects and analyzes some data annually to ensure activities are responsive to and informed by the most recent data. Figure 2 provides data on the children served by program for Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023, along with the FY26 targets. These data reveal there have been fluctuations in enrollment based on the program type. For example, the number of children receiving developmental screenings, early intervention services, and home visiting has increased, but the number of children enrolled in public preschool and receiving child care subsidy has declined, indicating that center-based programs may be slower to respond to COVID-19 compared to programs that provide services in a home setting. As part of the 2022 strategic planning activities, OOC estimates more than 185,000 children B-5 who are economically disadvantaged (living in households at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level) and in need of public funding to support their early childhood care and education.

While OOC has increased the total number of children served, current data shows that too few families who are economically disadvantaged have access to early childhood programs and services. These data illustrate that Missouri has considerable work to do to ensure all children who need early childhood support can access them.

Figure 2: Children Served by Programs Administered by OOC⁴

Program	FY22	FY23	% Change	FY26 Target
Children Receiving Developmental Screenings	73,300	79,596	+ 9%	120,593
First Steps Early Intervention (Part C of IDEA)	7,455	8,235	+ 10%	8,427
Public Preschool	41,291	38,932	- 6%	48,502
Home Visiting (Improving Health Outcomes)	1,056	1,039	- 2%	1,056
Home Visiting (Preventing Abuse/Neglect)	1,649	1,720	+ 4%	1,649
Child Care Subsidy*	29,226	23,050	- 21%	33,000

*FY22 data collection based on attendance and FY23 data collection based on enrollment

Crucial to ensuring all children and families have access is supporting the early childhood programs that provide care. Figure 3 below provides data on the number of child care providers in Missouri. These data show there were minimal changes to the provider counts between FY22 and FY23 even though child care relief funds were provided to support and stabilize the child care industry during this time. For example, 145 providers received over \$18.8 million to expand their child care programs and 308 providers received over \$39.6 million to start-up new child care programs. In total, over \$629 million in child care relief funds were used to support child care in Missouri through various activities from September 2021 to October 2023. Data reveal these funds helped stabilize the child care industry during COVID-19, but did not grow the industry, meaning for any new programs that opened during this time, there was a corresponding number of programs that were closing or reducing capacities. Data also show a growth in capacity but not necessarily in the number of providers, which indicates existing child care programs expanded their programs and remained open more often than a new program started up and stayed open.

⁴ <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/2023-strategic-plan-goal-1-measures-progress-report>

Figure 3: Child Care Data (Annual Average Count)

Number of Providers	FY22	FY23	% Change
Contracted subsidy child care providers	2,419	2,431	<1%
Regulated child care providers (licensed/license-exempt) *	2,888	2,889	<1%
Regulated facility capacity	164,549	168,205	2%

*Includes a duplicate count of contracted subsidy providers who are regulated child care providers.

Planned Activities

If awarded, Missouri will use this PDG B-5 renewal grant to 1) conduct a comprehensive statewide needs assessment; and 2) conduct stakeholder engagement activities.

Conduct Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment

Missouri will use this renewal opportunity to update its comprehensive needs assessment in 2025. The creation of the ECIDS strengthened the state's data infrastructure, allowing OOC to conduct a more robust needs assessment through surveying the entire early childhood landscape in direct alignment with the goals and targets defined in the strategic plan. At a minimum the comprehensive needs assessment will consider the following across Missouri's mixed delivery system:

- Counts and demographics on the B-5 population being served in existing programs and to the extent possible those who are not able to be served;
- Needs and resources that may impact program design and service delivery;
- Quality and availability of programs and services for all families especially those who are economically disadvantaged;
- To the extent possible, reasons for why families struggle to access high-quality care;
- The mental and behavioral health needs of children, their families, and the early childhood workforce; and

- Counts, demographics, and program information for children receiving IDEA Part B/619 and Part C (First Steps) services.

Conducting the comprehensive needs assessment will help illuminate the gaps existing in the state's ECIDS, and how data are shared with families and the early childhood workforce. This needs assessment will also help to elevate gaps in how health, mental health, and the early childhood system in Missouri work together to meet the needs of young families.

Missouri will be able to substantially update the needs assessment and evaluate the success of PDG B-5 activities in complete alignment with the four goals of the state's strategic plan. Figure 4 depicts a detailed plan for updating the PDG B-5 needs assessment in 2025. This depicts a similar annual operating cycle for both needs assessment and strategic plan activities for future years.

Figure 4: Plan for Updating the Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment in 2025

Timeline	Activity
Q1 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present draft of updated, unified strategic plan and targets to the State Board of Education - Conduct community-embedded stakeholder engagement activities
Q2 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue stakeholder engagements, as needed - Collect necessary data elements for updating needs assessment
Q3 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use results from stakeholder engagement and data analysis to update needs assessment - Evaluate progress toward 2026 strategic plan targets
Q4 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update strategic plan to establish next year's action items - Review updated needs assessment, progress toward strategic plan targets, and updated strategic plan with stakeholders

Conduct Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Once a draft of the updated needs assessment is complete, OOC plans to share the results with a wide group of diverse stakeholders by holding listening sessions and including it as a topic in OOC's monthly webinar to seek feedback from stakeholders, with an emphasis on input from early childhood professionals, parents, community leaders and other early childhood

leaders. Feedback and qualitative data gathered from these engagement opportunities will inform the direction of not only the draft 2025 strategic plan, but also the ongoing needs assessment cycle used to drive updates to both the needs assessment and strategic plan. In particular, engaging early childhood professionals will help OOC to gather qualitative data about the current early childhood workforce, including the well-being of the workforce. Engagement with the field, along with other workforce data, will provide insight and support the development of innovative strategies to address the challenges facing the early childhood workforce (see Activity 4 for more detail).

Measurable Outcomes

Success across the two main activities described above will: 1) update comprehensive statewide needs assessment; and 2) conduct stakeholder engagement activities. Success will be measured by:

1. **Needs assessment report:** Missouri will complete an updated compressive needs assessment report by 2025.
2. **Stakeholder engagement summary:** Missouri will summarize the data collected during stakeholder engagement activities in the needs assessment report.

Activity 2: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan

Background

In the 2019 PDG B-5 renewal application, Missouri identified the need for a unified strategic plan grounded in the results of a needs assessment and developed in collaboration with a diverse group of stakeholders (see Activity 1 for more details). In 2021, after consolidating nearly all childhood programs into one office and inheriting various strategic plans, Missouri began the development of a more unified early childhood strategic plan that would articulate a

vision and set of goals for the full mixed delivery early childhood system. Missouri was intentional in aligning the updated strategic plan to incorporate strategies from different agencies and the state's K-12 strategic plan that includes a goal related to early learning.⁵ To address the four key challenges detailed in Activity 1 and meet the diverse needs of families and children, Missouri's current plan focuses on four big goals:

Figure 5: Missouri's Four Big Goals

Big Goal	Approach
Expand access to high-quality programs and services	Missouri will expand access to high-quality early childhood options for families by identifying current gaps and maximizing existing and new resources.
Improve the quality of programs and services	Missouri will define a vision of quality for the state and provide aligned supports and incentives for providers in order to drive continuous improvement in the quality of early childhood programs and services.
Strengthen community leadership	Missouri will identify, support, and empower local leaders in every part of the state to develop and implement strong community plans aimed at ensuring all families with young children can access high-quality programs, services, and resources in their communities.
Modernize systems and improve operations	Missouri will identify and implement critical shifts in OOC operations to focus on the experience of families and early childhood professionals and to yield important data to inform policy and decision-making.

Missouri is clear that without a well-supported early childhood workforce, these four goals are unachievable. The early childhood workforce is the foundation for ensuring the state is able to accomplish these four big goals.

Since unifying the B-5 programs, OOC was able to align its strategic plans into one plan and one three-year cycle, as such Missouri's comprehensive strategic plan for early childhood will not need to be updated until 2026 after the needs assessment is updated.

Accomplishments

Missouri's most significant accomplishment to date related to strategic planning have been the implementation of the comprehensive strategic plan for Missouri's childhood system,

⁵ <https://dese.mo.gov/communications/show-me-success>

the collection of three years of data from the state's Kindergarten Entry Assessment, and the launch of an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS).

Implementation of Comprehensive Strategic Plan

In 2023, Missouri began the implementation of its comprehensive strategic plan that is aligned to the CCDF state plan and other programs and services the state administers. The strategic plan outlines the objectives and strategies that the state has worked to implement to actualize these goals for Missouri's early childhood system by 2026. Since many of the objectives are a result of multi-year initiatives, specific action items are identified and conducted, then reported as part of an ECSAC meeting and subsequent monthly webinar, in the fall of each year. The report includes measurable indicators that track progress over time. Figure 6 shows the progress OOC has made in accomplishing the 2023 action items in the strategic plan.

Figure 6: Missouri's Strategic Plan Action Items Completed in 2023

Big Goal	Target by 2026	Action Items Completed in 2023
Goal 1: Expand access to high-quality programs and services	14% more children and families enrolled in childhood programs	14 out of 15 completed or in progress
Goal 2: Improve the quality of programs and services	660 programs participating in Quality Assurance Report (QAR)	8 out of 9 completed or in progress
Goal 3: Strengthen community leadership	100% of counties with community leaders	5 out of 5 completed or in progress
Goal 4: Modernize systems and improve operations	3 new modernized systems will be used to collect childhood data	4 out of 5 completed or in progress

The goals in Missouri's early childhood strategic plan also align with DESE's strategic plan for K-12 education. Since OOC is housed under DESE, one priority area addressed in the K-12 strategic plan is early learning. DESE's plan clearly shows the priority for ensuring every child has access to high-quality early learning opportunities prior to their entry into kindergarten is pivotal to establishing a strong foundation for future success in school and in life.

Measuring Kindergarten Readiness

Missouri recognizes the ultimate measure of success for the early childhood system is school readiness. In 2021, using previously awarded PDG B-5 funding, OOC conducted a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) pilot using the Kindergarten Observation Form (KOF). The following year, the state's K-12 data system was updated to include information on the KEA for children who participated in the KOF pilot as well as those who were assessed with a state-approved KEA tool, as the KOF is just one of three approved tools. Conducting a KEA is part of the state's K-12 school improvement planning process with points awarded for KEA participation. Recent KOF pilot data are shown in the Figure 7 and 8.

Figure 7: Number of Participating Districts, Schools, and Classrooms, by Year

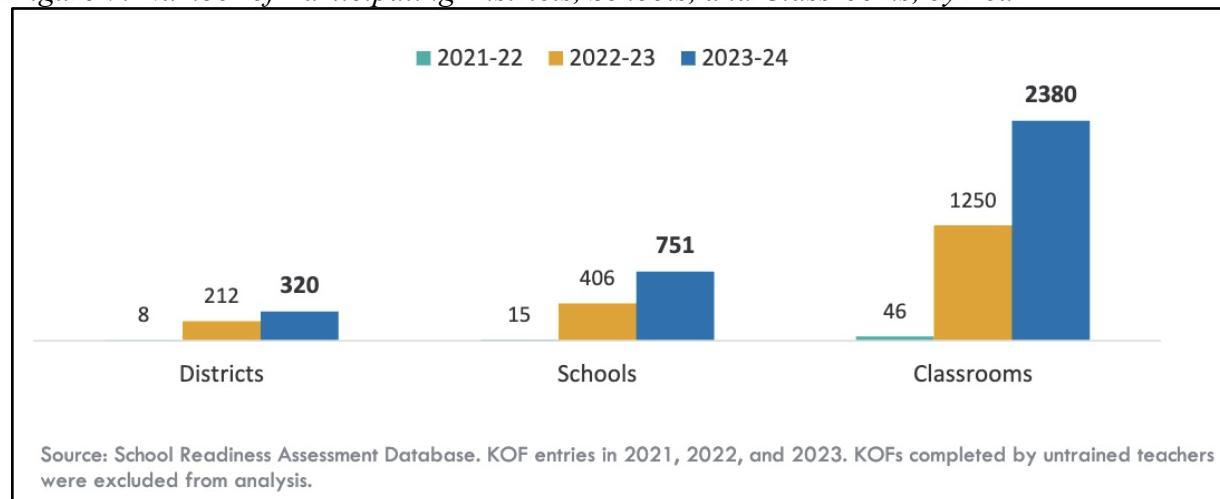
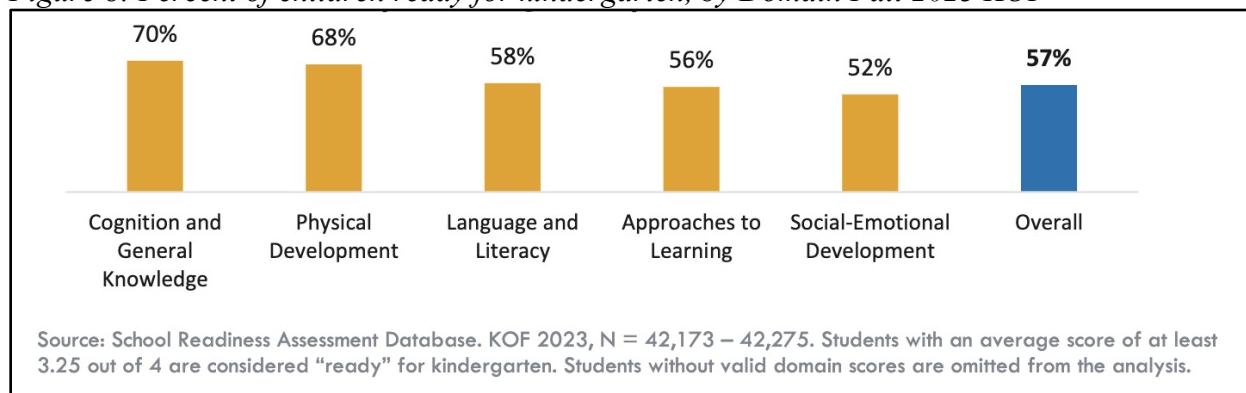


Figure 8: Percent of children ready for kindergarten, by Domain Fall 2023 KOF



Now, with three years of data from the KEA pilot, leaders at every level of the system have a clearer picture of kindergarten readiness in Missouri. These data will continue to be used to evaluate how well the current early childhood system is preparing children for kindergarten, to inform where to target quality improvement resources, and to inform professional development opportunities for both early childhood professionals and kindergarten teachers.

Developing Stronger Data Infrastructure

Missouri's biggest accomplishment in 2023 related to improving the use of data was the development and implementation of the ECIDS. Designed by a group of stakeholders who spent a year identifying and discussing indicators of school readiness, ECIDS was built around 28 core indicators of readiness, including child, family, services, community, and school factors.⁶ Funded by PDG B-5, the ECIDS was launched internally in December 2023 and publicly in January 2024 via a data dashboard. Previously, the child-serving agencies separately collected and reported different data elements using varying collection and reporting methods.

ECIDS generates reports for the public and individuals interested in improving programs and services for Missouri children B-5, such as educators, early childhood professionals, policymakers, and community leaders. Missouri's ECIDS includes the following program participation data: public preschool (including Part B/Section 619 of IDEA), evidence-based home visiting, First Steps (Part C of IDEA), parent education, and state-funded Early Head Start. Additional indicators such as rates of child abuse/neglect, poverty level, and need for special education are also part of the data dashboard. Information from the ECIDS helps identify gaps or overlaps in services, which informs decisions like outreach, child find activities, service delivery, funding, and workforce recruitment and retention techniques. Public reports provide

⁶ <https://earlyconnections.mo.gov/media/pdf/missouris-school-readiness-indicators>

details of services available in Missouri communities and information about school readiness indicators to show how well children are prepared to enter kindergarten. Missouri is able to report an unduplicated count of children participating in early childhood programs participating in the ECIDS and use this information to make decisions about access to and participation in early childhood programs.

Lessons Learned

The biggest lesson learned related to strategic planning over multiple years of conducting this process has been the need to have partnerships with local stakeholders and community-embedded partners. Missouri will not be able to address the state's challenges without engagement that represents the mixed delivery system at all levels – state, regional, and local. The diversity of Missouri's landscape requires a state-local partnership model in which early childhood initiatives are aligned to a state level vision and can be tailored to the unique needs, challenges, and strengths of a community.

Planned Activities

If awarded, Missouri will use this PDG B-5 renewal grant to: 1) conduct stakeholder engagement and update the strategic plan; 2) continue to strengthen the state's data infrastructure; and 3) monitor progress against the strategic plan.

Conduct Stakeholder Engagement and Update the Strategic Plan

In 2026, Missouri will publish an updated strategic plan laying out a vision for the state's early childhood system for the next three years. OOC has aligned all activities and projects within OOC to the strategic plan to ensure efforts are maximized and focused on achieving its expected outcomes. OOC, in partnership with the ECSAC, will seek feedback from stakeholders through listening sessions, webinars, and other forms of engagement to hear directly from early childhood professionals, families, childhood community leaders and other early childhood

leaders. Informed by the stakeholder engagement recommendations made by The Hunt Institute, OOC has used the strategic plan as an opportunity for relationship building, collaboration on decision-making, and making connections in the strategic plan to feedback received as part of the stakeholder engagements. The feedback collected from these engagements will help shape the objectives and targets for the updated strategic plan while addressing Missouri's ultimate goal of school readiness.

As was done with the current strategic plan, the 2026 strategic plan will take into account any shifts in need grounded in the data, be comprehensive, and focused on implementing strategies across the mixed delivery system that expand access especially for economically disadvantaged families, improve quality to meet the diverse needs of families, support the needs of the early childhood workforce, deepen partnerships with communities who are leading this work, and continue to build the state's data infrastructure. The 2026 strategic plan will set the vision that all federal and state funding streams and programs, including CCDF and Head Start, align their work for the next three years to ensure greater collective impact of dollars. This statewide alignment across funding streams will serve to stabilize the child care sector, encourage expansion and innovation that provides support for the early childhood workforce.

Continue to Strengthen Data Infrastructure

OOC will use data from its data systems that collect early childhood information to inform the updated strategic plan, including the systems used by programs included in ECIDS. Systems that are not yet part of ECIDS are primarily related to child care services. The Child Care Data System (CCDS) is a web-based system for parents to apply for child care assistance and for providers to complete the contract and payment processes. Additionally, child care licensing data are maintained in several systems outside of CCDS: the Child Care Regulation

Information System (CCRIS), Missouri Child Care Inspection System (MOCCIS), Child Care Portal, BI Portal, and Show Me Child Care Provider Search are used to collect and report information about licensed and license-exempt programs in Missouri. The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) also uses a system separate from all of these. This fragmented data structure for child care results in numerous interfaces between systems and manual activity to validate data and generate reports.

Utilizing PDG B-5 renewal grant funds, Missouri will take a phased approach to this data infrastructure work:

- **Phase 1: Support the integration of KEA data into ECIDS.** Missouri will expand the data collected in ECIDS to include KEA outcomes, child care desert maps, and current child care data. Missouri will also look for ways to elevate the ECIDS to stakeholders who could benefit from this information when making decisions about early childhood programs and services.
- **Phase 2: Migrate data from CCDS into ECIDS.** Missouri will work to migrate current data from CCDS into ECIDS to ensure children participating in the child care subsidy program are represented in the counts of children receiving services.
- **Phase 3: Migrate data from CCRIS, MOCCIS, and CCR&R into CCDS.** Missouri will identify a way to migrate the child care licensing data into the Child Care Data System (CCDS) and configure CCDS to fit the business needs for child care licensing, regulation, and subsidy. Missouri will also chart a plan for migrating Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) data into CCDS. This will allow critical information like child care supply data to be gathered through CCDS directly without the use and reference of multiple systems.

Monitor Progress Made on Strategic Plan

OOC will use PDG B-5 funding to monitor progress of the strategic plan, through a set of measures for each goal, centered around school readiness using the KEA (see Activity 5 for more detail). Missouri can review data derived from the KEA as a way to monitor how well early childhood offerings are preparing children for kindergarten and to inform professional development opportunities for both early childhood professionals and kindergarten teachers. For example, the KEA results from the 2023-24 school year show that children are scoring low in the domain of Approaches to Learning and Social Emotional, based on this data, Missouri will develop statewide training for early childhood professionals on Approaches to Learning and Social Emotional Development in young children.

Measurable Outcomes

Success across the three main activities described above will: 1) update Missouri's strategic plan based on the updated needs assessment, 2) collect stakeholder feedback on updated strategic plan; and 3) integrate at least four legacy systems into CCDS and integrate CCDS into ECIDS. Success will be measured by:

1. **Strategic plan:** Missouri will finalize and disseminate a strategic plan for the next three years.
2. **Stakeholder feedback summary:** Missouri will disseminate a summary of stakeholder feedback collected on the strategic plan draft.
3. **CCDS integration:** The number of legacy systems integrated into CCDS with the goal of four systems.
4. **ECIDS integration:** The integration of CCDS data into ECIDS.

Activity 3: Maximize Family Participation and Engagement in the B-5 System

Background

Missouri's B-5 system is grounded in the belief that family participation and engagement begins with access to information and inclusion of those closest to children. Meaningful family participation requires engagement – not just during design and exploration of policies – but also throughout implementation of initiatives and programs. Thus, meaningful participation requires OOC to take a proactive approach to engaging families that uses best practices and empowers existing state-regional-local partnerships through the work of the childhood community leaders. Utilizing PDG B-5 funding in 2019, Missouri partnered with the University of Missouri - Kansas City's Institute for Human Development to: 1) develop a common definition of family engagement; and 2) identify best practices in family engagement.⁷ Figure 9 shows Missouri's operational definition of family engagement.

Figure 9: Missouri's Operational Definition of Family Engagement

Operational Definition of Family Engagement

An interactive process of relationship building between early childhood professionals and families that is mutual, respectful, and responsive to the family's language, culture, assets, and needs. Early engagement with families prepares them to support their children's learning throughout their school years and enhances parent/family-child relationships, which are key to healthy child development, school readiness, and well-being.

In addition to this operational definition, Missouri also developed five best practices (see Figure 10) that serve as the foundation for all programs to apply to their unique context.

Figure 10: Missouri's Best Practices for Family Engagement

Best Practices for Family Engagement

- 1.** Professionals seek to build genuine relationships with families.
- 2.** Programs implement equitable and inclusive practices that honor families' race, ethnicity, language, family structures, and individual situations.
- 3.** Programs seek to establish meaningful partnerships with families to support children's well-being.

⁷ <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/pdg-family-engagement-best-practices>

- 4.** Programs seek to build upon families' knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- 5.** Programs provide services to promote family well-being and coordinate services among other providers

Regardless of how an early childhood program chooses to implement these best practices, what is true across all of them is the need for family-centered practices. Children exist within the context of their families and meeting the needs of a child requires supporting families to make their own informed decisions about their child.

Accomplishments

Missouri's biggest accomplishment in related to family engagement was the creation of the Missouri Family Resources website and accompanying mobile app. In addition to the media campaigns, newsletters, and a multitude of other dissemination channels through partner organizations, the Missouri Family Resources website and app help to offer families a streamlined way to access the resources they need in their communities right at their fingertips. Prior to this website and app, there was no real way for families to search the multitude of programs and services available to them in their community. The state's progress on family engagement also includes expanding access to information about programs and services, involving families in a meaningful way to inform system-level priorities, and helping to build collective knowledge of the system including the importance of early literacy and quality.

Expanding Access to Information about Programs and Services

Utilizing the PDG B-5 planning grant, Missouri has encouraged family participation and engagement in the B-5 mixed delivery system by ensuring families are able to access information in a way that is user-friendly and meets families where they are at in their lives. Families in Missouri can access information not just through the improved Early Connections website⁸ but

⁸ <https://earlyconnections.mo.gov/>

also through the new Missouri Family Resources website and accompanying mobile app.⁹ As part of the PDG B-5 planning grant, OOC was able to launch and create Missouri Family Resources that is accessible to families 24/7 and offers users the ability to search and connect to early childhood resources in their community. In April 2024, Missouri Family Resources had 2,457 searches for local early childhood resources.

In addition to these online resources, Missouri has also expanded access to information through the work of the Childhood Community Leaders across the state.¹⁰ Missouri has divided the state into seven Childhood Community Leaders regions: Northwest, Southwest, Northeast, North Central, South Central, St. Louis, and Southeast; and each area has designated at least two childhood community leaders, with one being from a public entity and one being from a private/non-profit community partner, in order to promote public and private partnerships across the state. Childhood Community Leaders help to increase awareness of and coordination among early childhood programs and services within their local context. Childhood Community Leaders have also been charged with identifying the barriers families face and collaborating with stakeholders to find ways to remove them.

Engaging Families in Developmental Screening

In 2022, OOC provided 12 trainings on the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)-3 and ASQ:SE-2 screening tools, with 707 individuals completing the training. In addition to offering this training, which includes information on how to speak to families about screening results, at no cost each trainee received a screening kit to complete developmental screenings with children in their programs. Developmental screenings performed by state-funded home visiting programs

⁹ <https://dese.mo.gov/childhood/missouri-family-resources>

¹⁰ <https://earlyconnections.mo.gov/what-we-do/communityleaders>

are recorded and collected in ECIDS. Missouri saw a 9% increase in the number of children receiving developmental screening from FY22 to FY23, which has resulted in more families understanding their child's development.

Involving Families in a Meaningful Way to Inform System-Level Priorities

Families are encouraged to participate in decision making and implementation through the Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and through Parent Cafés. Missouri has a statewide PAC as well as four regional PAC sites families are encouraged to participate in and connect with other parents. The statewide PAC meets twice a year and is focused on listening to feedback from regional PAC meetings and receiving information from state level staff on any changes made since the last meeting. The four regional PACs are also meeting twice a year to solicit feedback from parents in the community and compile feedback, and each regional PAC elects two parents to represent the region on the statewide PAC. Each regional PAC created their own core leadership team of parents to guide local work and develop the regional PAC. This activity continues and is funded with Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Health Integration Prenatal-to-Three (ECCS) grant funds.

Previous PDG B-5 funding was used to conduct Parent Café Training as well as Train the Trainer sessions. Parent Café events are often hosted by family serving agencies throughout the state. These parent focused events encourage self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning with other parents to promote collaboration and leadership. Parent Cafés provide a safe, non-judgmental opportunity for parents and caregivers to engage in conversations about what it means to keep their children safe and families strong. Missouri was able to establish a network of Parent Cafe trainers that continue to support their local communities.

Building Collective Knowledge of the System

Missouri conducted several mass media campaigns that included developing key messages for workforce development, early childhood resources, and the importance of developmental screenings. Missouri also implemented a new initiative in November 2023 to support families with young children through its successful launch of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Missouri. This program sends books each month to registered children from birth to age five, at no cost to families. The advertising and media campaign for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Missouri was funded with the PDG B-5 planning grant and general revenue dollars. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Missouri is fully funded by the state's legislature, thereby ensuring every child B-5 has access to a free book every month.

Lessons Learned

Through the work thus far to engage families, Missouri has learned the importance of local partnerships in ensuring family engagement and participation. It is impossible for OOC to engage families across the state on its own, the state needs local on-the-ground partners like the childhood community leaders to build trust and encourage families to engage in their child's early childhood education. Regional and local leaders are best positioned to bring parents along because they understand their local context and can relate to the experience families are facing. Building regional and local structures through which families can engage has been crucial to elevating parent voices to the state so that challenges and opportunities the state is working to address are in line with what families need.

Planned Activities

If awarded Missouri will use this renewal grant to: 1) promote the importance of quality early childhood programs and services; 2) develop a system for coordinated referral and enrollment; 3) expand the capacity of childhood community leaders to engage families at the local level; and 4) define what culturally and linguistically responsive practices are for Missouri's families.

Promote the Importance of Quality Early Childhood Programs and Services

To promote and elevate the importance of quality early childhood programs and services, Missouri plans to launch a statewide media campaign for:

1. Elevating the state's definition of quality through family-friendly materials.
2. Launching an expanded media campaign highlighting the Missouri Family Resources website and associated app.
3. Launching an expanded media campaign to highlight Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Missouri.
4. Launching an expanded media campaign to promote early childhood education career pathways to grow the workforce to support additional families and children participating in B-5 programs and services.

Develop a System for Coordinated Enrollment

One of the themes that arose during the 2019 needs assessment, is that the early care and education (ECE) system in Missouri lacked a coordinated referral and enrollment process for families to enter the system. Families told OOC that they did not know what resources are available or where to go to find services for their children which is why the Early Connections website was created and then later the Missouri Family Resources was launched. These activities are the first steps toward developing a system for coordinated enrollment.

Families need a clear way to navigate the landscape of early childhood programs and services they qualify for and then enroll in programs and services that best meet their needs. The states Children's Trust Fund developed and implemented CRIS Link, which allows anyone to make an early childhood home visiting referral through one of five regional networks. After a referral is submitted the system assigns the family to a home visiting program based on needs their needs, eligibility, and program capacity. Considering existing systems, Missouri will expand the number of state- and federally-funded home visiting programs using the coordinated enrollment system. In addition, Missouri is working toward having all early childhood programs in an online coordinated enrollment systems (e.g., public preschool, prekindergarten, child care, developmental screening). While Missouri has made progress towards coordinated enrollment in recent years, there are still steps to take to have a statewide coordinated enrollment system for all early childhood programs.

OOC aims to engage families in the exploration of existing enrollment processes for child care, home visiting, early intervention, and preschool to identify where there is alignment, what best practices look like, and where improvements should be made. Using this information OOC will plan for bringing separate enrollment processes together to support families' ability to access services in an easy, user-friendly format. Success will be measured as OOC works to stand up a coordinated enrollment process that streamlines the family experience.

Expand the Capacity of Childhood Community Leaders to Engage Families at the Local Level

Missouri's Childhood Community Leaders have served as strong partners for family engagement. OOC has published best practices for family engagement¹¹ and using this framework will support Childhood Community Leaders to strengthen their family engagement

¹¹ <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/pdg-family-engagement-best-practices>

strategies. It is the responsibility of each of the seven selected Childhood Community Leaders to bring stakeholders together to increase awareness of early childhood programs and services.

Missouri will empower Childhood Community Leaders to deepen collaborations with local partners such as local Head Start grantees, Missouri's Parent Education Programs, and local chambers of commerce to reach parents in the communities where they live. These activities will be integrated into the community leader local early childhood strategic plans that include statewide and locally selected measures of success.

Define Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices for Missouri's Families

Missouri does not currently have a definition for what culturally and linguistically responsive practices are for use by families and by professionals serving young children. Beyond ensuring translation services are available for all publicly funded services and resources, the state does not currently have a definition of these practices and what they are specifically for Missouri's families. Using existing resources and staff, Missouri will explore the national standard for culturally and linguistically responsive practices and determine how to implement those practices across the state. Missouri will then build out the existing Early Connections website to include resources for families and professionals about culturally and linguistically responsive practices. OOC will also support the Spanish-speaking population of early childhood educators by providing coaches and evaluators working in the Quality Assurance Report and Child Care Network programs who are Spanish speaking.

Increase Families Receiving Developmental Screening

Missouri will continue to offer training to early professions on the use of social emotional development screenings. In 2022, OOC provided 12 trainings on the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)-3 and ASQ:SE-2 screening tools, with 707 individuals completing the

training. In addition to offering this training for free. Through increased developmental screening activities more families will learn about their child's development and identify developmental delays. Families will learn to support everyday learning activities with their child.

Measurable Outcomes

Success across the five main activities described above will: 1) promote the importance of quality early childhood programs and services; 2) develop a system for coordinated referral and enrollment; 3) expand the capacity of childhood community leaders to engage families at the local level; 4) define what culturally and linguistically responsive practices are for Missouri's families; 5) increase developmental screening training and materials for professionals. Success will be measured by:

1. **Website Analytics:** An increase in the number of clicks, visits, usage, and downloads to the Early Connections, Missouri Family Resources, and the career pathways webpage. This will also be seen through enrollment numbers in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
2. **Implementation Plan:** A implementation plan can support making coordinated referral and enrollment a reality in Missouri. This plan will, at a minimum, include a timeline for when families will be able to access the referral and enrollment system and a design plan that can connect the coordinated referral and enrollment system data to ECIDS.
3. **Childhood Community Leader Reports:** Community leaders will be responsible for reporting stakeholder engagement numbers to OOC. They will also be responsible for submitting their strategic plans to OOC, which will include their plan for creating family engagement structures.

4. **Definition of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices:** Missouri will have a definition for culturally and linguistically responsive practices that is shared across the mixed delivery system and is promoted with stakeholders.
5. **Number of Children Receiving Developmental Screening:** Missouri will measure the number of children receiving developmental screening reported in ECIDS.

Activity 4: Support the B-5 Workforce

Background

As Missouri continues to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on the early childhood workforce, with previous PDG B-5, ECCS, CCDF, and general revenue funding, the state has made progress in understanding the needs of the early childhood workforce, building a coherent strategy for supporting the workforce, and continuing to provide financial supports for providers to address the acute challenges facing the workforce. Missouri understands that without a qualified and supported workforce, none of the goals of its strategic plan will come to fruition. The early childhood system relies on over 33,000 professionals across mixed delivery settings to serve children and families. Missouri cannot increase access to programs and services to children and families without considering the needs of the early childhood workforce. Understanding and supporting the early childhood workforce is critical to the success of the mixed delivery system. Figure 11 provides aggregate data on the early childhood workforce across Missouri's mixed delivery system.

Figure 11: Missouri's Early Childhood Workforce (FY22)

Estimated Total 33,592 early childhood professionals		Type of Professional 31,852 (94.8%) are educators who work with groups of children 1,072 (3.2%) are home visitors who support children and families 668 (2.0%) are early intervention special instructors and service coordinators	
Gender 98% female 2% male	Age* 48% are under 35 years old 34% are 35 - 54 years old 19% are over 55 years old	Racial Distribution 62% white 12% Black or African-American 6% Asian <1% American Indian or Alaska Native 19% Hispanic 10% Multi-Racial	Education Approximately 44% do not have a credential or degree beyond a high school education

*State FY22 data are not available for the age of professionals; these data are from FY21.

Accomplishments

Missouri's greatest accomplishments to date when it comes to supporting the B-5 workforce was setting goals for Missouri's early childhood workforce by 2030, launching the enhanced workforce registry, and supporting the workforce through scholarships and incentives.

Goals for Missouri's Early Childhood Workforce by 2030

Missouri recently identified a set of activities needed to strengthen the workforce by 2030.¹² This list of activities includes a proposed time frame for when those activities are expected to be completed. The biggest goal in this work is that by 2030, 75% of Missouri's early childhood workforce will meet Level 1 minimum qualifications, which are aligned with NAEYC Unifying Framework. Progress on these activities has resulted in:

1. The development of a new early childhood careers webpage where professionals can learn about the opportunities that exist in this field;¹³

¹² <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/early-childhood-workforce-activities-2030>

¹³ <https://earlyconnections.mo.gov/professionals/early-childhood-careers>

2. The implementation of a Selected Occupations Chart for educators that is designed to define and align nine targeted occupations with qualifications in the fields of Early Childhood Education, Family Services, and Home Visiting for the purposes of developing career pathways;¹⁴
3. The development of a list of Child Development Associate (CDA) vendors that are of quality; and
4. The articulation of a set of three courses (Core 9) amongst two-year community colleges that includes ECE Core 101: Introduction/Foundations of Early Childhood Education, ECE Core 102: Health, Nutrition, and Safety, and ECE Core 200: Working/Partnership with Families and Communities. and can be easily transferred between colleges.

Launch an Enhanced Workforce Registry

In 2023, Missouri launched the Missouri Professional Development (MOPD) system¹⁵ with a single login that brings four distinct pieces of workforce registries and supports into one portal. Currently 5,212 early childhood programs are registered in MOPD. Early childhood professionals access the registry, clock-hour training, online learning management system, and data reports all in one portal. Historical data, including employment records and transcripts, was merged with the new system so professionals can access this information regardless of their employer. Having these components housed in one place streamlines the professional development process and creates one space for OOC to ensure early childhood professionals have the opportunities they need to support Missouri's children and families.

¹⁴ <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/selected-occupations-chart>

¹⁵ <https://earlyconnections.mo.gov/MOPD>

Supporting the Workforce through Scholarships and Incentives

With PDG B-5 and CCDF funding, Missouri continues to support the child care workforce through T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI scholarships, LEAD scholarships, and retention grants. In 2023, the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Missouri Scholarship program supported 210 students to complete 1,510 college credits toward an Associate or Bachelor's degree. This scholarship program also supported more than 500 professionals earning a CDA.

In 2023, Missouri used the PDG B-5 planning grant to launch a T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI scholarship program and a retention incentive program for home visitors working home visiting programs. To date, Missouri has funded 20 home visitors through the T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI scholarships across 10 counties. It is crucial for a strong mixed delivery system to provide equitable opportunities for professionals working across settings and for those working with the most vulnerable children and families to prevent interruption in the relationship and trust built between families and home visitors.

Another workforce support for early childhood educators is the CDA Scholarship Project which uses CCDF funding to reimburse candidates up to \$350 of training costs. The Workforce Project Team developed a rubric to evaluate on-line, on-demand CDA training vendors and offer standardized guidance regarding recommending them as approved training for the CDA Scholarship Project. Through the evaluation process, a total of five training entities were presented for recommendation. Using child care relief funds to support the workforce, the Missouri Supporting Early Childhood Administrators (MO-SECA) training program was created to provide early childhood administrators across the state with the knowledge, skills, and connections they need to effectively lead and operate sustainable, quality programs.¹⁶

¹⁶ <https://mo-seca.com/details/>

Participants receive a stipend for \$25 per hour of training sessions completed, for up to nine hours of business training and up to nine hours of leadership training (up to \$450 total).

Finally, Missouri has supported the early childhood workforce through the creation of registered apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are one way to support recruitment and retention of professionals to help keep workforce shortages down. Across the nation there is diminishing interest in the field of early childhood and no pipeline to generate opportunities for individuals interested in an early childhood career, which is why a registered apprenticeship program is important for high school students and adults to have a pathway into the profession and allow them to get paid and trained at the same time.

Lessons Learned

The biggest lesson learned related to supporting the workforce has been the need to recruit, support, and retain an effective workforce that meets the needs of children and families across the mixed delivery system and across the state. Regardless of the skill set that an early childhood professional has, it is imperative that they be provided with ongoing professional development that is culturally responsive, as well as responsive to their level of experience and the needs of their community.

Planned Activities

Missouri will use this PDG B-5 renewal grant to: 1) increase participation in early childhood apprenticeships; 2) support providers through sharing best practices for business/management; 3) expand the types of offerings in the T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI scholarship program; and 4) enhance the MOPD system to make it more user-friendly and to include quality program information.

Increase Participation in Early Childhood Apprenticeships

Registered apprenticeships develop the workforce pipeline by increasing interest in the field of early childhood, particularly with high school students and young adults. Apprenticeship programs also support the upskilling of unemployed individuals interested in careers in early childhood. DESE will continue to partner with the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development (DHEWD) to ensure early childhood apprenticeship slots are available across the state. In Missouri's apprenticeship model, apprentices work to obtain their CDA, while working and earning income in the child care sector. Utilizing child care relief funding, Missouri awarded over \$2 million to fund apprenticeship participation. Missouri plans to build on this infrastructure that was created with child care relief funds to attract more professionals to the early childhood field and improve the effectiveness of the workforce.

Support Providers Through Sharing Best Practices for Management and Leadership

In 2023, MOSECA served 748 early childhood programs from across the state (small centers, large centers, and family child care centers) and delivered 2,228 unique coaching visits supporting early childhood administrators. As part of the final report from the launch of the MOSECA program, UMKC and OOC will evaluate the feedback from participants to determine which components of the program were the most effective for directors and administrators. Based on this evaluation, Missouri aims to continue the portions of the training that were the most impactful, using CCDF funding for the training sessions. Missouri plans to use the PDG B-5 renewal grant to support stipends for directors and administrators contracted with child care subsidy program and/or in child care desert areas of the state, in order to ensure they have access to participate in this opportunity.

Expand T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI Scholarships

Missouri has developed a model for successfully supporting early childhood professionals to attain their CDA and college degree. Missouri plans to use PDG B-5 renewal funding to offer additional early childhood professionals access to career advancement opportunities through T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI scholarships. To build on the success of the T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI program, the state plans to use PDG B-5 renewal funding to continue supporting T.E.A.C.H MISSOURI for home visitors and expand to serve public preschool educators working to attain their Bachelor's degree with an early childhood certification as well as high school students working towards a CDA. The expansion to serve public preschool teachers was identified after the Missouri legislature appropriated funding in FY24 for prekindergarten grants for school districts and community-based child care programs to receive state funds for preschool services for low-income children, known as the Missouri Quality Prekindergarten (MOQPK) grant. A T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI scholarship that is explicitly meant for prekindergarten teachers will support the workforce as they work towards a degree and certification. With a shortage of public school teachers, this scholarship will help support the pipeline of qualified educators in elementary grades as well, across the state.

The expansion of scholarships is expected to include a new CDA credential for high school students. This model addresses the need for a stronger pipeline between high school students in CDA programs through Career and Technical Centers (CTE) and the early childhood workforce. Both students and instructors cite the CDA application fee as a barrier to completing the credential. This means less high school students go into early childhood with a national credential and continue in their education and the field. The T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI High School CDA model would provide 95% (\$404) of the application fee while the student would

cover 5% (\$21) as their portion of the cost-sharing. This greatly reduces the burden of paying the entire \$425 CDA application fee.

Enhance the MOPD System

Missouri plans to use this PDG B-5 renewal grant to ensure all early childhood professionals, including home visitors, are registered, and tracking training requirements through MOPD. The MOPD system is currently maintained and funded by CCDF funding. In previous PDG B-5 applications, Missouri had planned to include registration and training for home visitors in MOPD, but due to state procurement delays, Missouri was unable to add this feature in the system. Missouri also planned to add QAR information into the system to make quickly connect teacher qualification and workforce data to the QAR. With the additional time offered through this PDG B-5 renewal grant, Missouri can successfully add home visitor training and Quality Assurance Report information into the MOPD system. In addition to this enhancement, MOPD also needs upgrades to make the system more user-friendly based on feedback OOC has received from directors and staff.

Measurable Outcomes

Success across the four main activities described above will: 1) increase participation in early childhood apprenticeships; 2) support providers through sharing best practices for management and leadership; 3) expand the types of offerings in the T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI scholarship program; and 4) enhance the MOPD system to make it more user-friendly and to include quality program information, will be measured by:

1. **Increase Enrollment in Apprenticeships:** Data on the number of individuals who enroll to participate in early childhood apprenticeship programs will be reviewed. OOC aims to increase enrollment into early childhood apprenticeship programs by 10%.

- 2. Subsidy Provider Participation in Leadership Training:** OOC aims to have all child care subsidy providers participate in leadership training and coaching, as measured through the registration and participant lists from trainings.
- 3. New T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI Opportunities:** The T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI program seeks to support 50 additional home visitors. In the two new T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI programs for public preschool teachers and the High School CDA model, Missouri will seek to support 20 teachers and 20 high school students during the first year.
- 4. Stakeholder Involvement in MOPD:** Missouri will survey users before and after the proposed enhancements are completed to determine the success of the enhancements in increasing the user friendliness of the system, with the goal of achieving 75% of the identified improvements.

Activity 5: Support Program Quality Improvement

Background

To achieve its vision that all children are safe, healthy, and successful learners when they enter kindergarten, Missouri is committed to improving the quality of early childhood programs and services. Since the consolidation of childhood programs into OOC – and with support from previous PDG B-5 funds – Missouri has made considerable strides in defining, measuring, and supporting improvement in the quality of early childhood programs. The support of the PDG B-5 renewal award will allow Missouri to scale its efforts to promote quality improvement and to ensure families have information related to program quality to support them to make informed decisions for their children.

Accomplishments

Missouri's most significant accomplishment to date related to supporting program quality improvement include formalizing a definition of early childhood quality with robust stakeholder input and scaling the Quality Assurance Report (QAR) initiative with sustainable funding. In addition, using child care relief funds, OOC supported child care professionals to participate in Conscious Discipline training, and using previous PDG B-5 funds, OOC supported home visitors to participate in Conscious Discipline training too. Missouri plans to build on these accomplishments to continue to drive and inform quality improvement across the state's mixed delivery system.

Operationalize a Definition of Early Childhood Quality

With a unified mixed delivery system, Missouri recognized the need for a single definition of quality across all early childhood programs and services. A system-wide definition of quality enables Missouri to work towards a common vision for what it means for children to receive high-quality care and education, across the continuum of early childhood programs offered throughout the state, regardless of the setting. That families have the information they need to make informed decisions about the quality of programs for their children; and that the field is focused on what matters most for children and families.

In 2023, Missouri used a stakeholder engagement process to gather input and solicit feedback on the state's proposed definition of quality and potential implementation of that definition. This stakeholder engagement process involved several listening and feedback sessions with a wide range of stakeholder types representing Missouri's comprehensive mixed delivery system, including child care providers, home visiting providers, and current participants in the state's QAR. The process resulted in the definition of quality, shown in Figure 12, that OOC now

uses to inform its quality improvement work across the continuum of early childhood and afterschool programs in the state.

Figure 12: Missouri's Definition of Quality

Definition of Quality in Early Childhood & Afterschool Setting:

Regardless of setting, children and families receive care, education, and services in safe, responsive, and culturally sensitive environments, in which qualified early childhood and afterschool professionals:

- Build secure relationships and engage with them in an emotionally supportive manner
- Support child learning and development through engaging language and interactions and developmentally appropriate activities
- Tailor support, as appropriate, to best meet the diverse needs and overall well-being of children and families

In addition to formalizing this definition, stakeholders provided feedback for OOC as it works to operationalize this definition. Figure 13 includes a summary of the feedback OOC received related to operationalizing and implementing this definition of feedback.

Figure 13: Stakeholder Recommendations for Operationalizing Quality Definition

Recommendation
OOC should create consistent, focused expectations for quality and quality improvement for providers to promote long-term continuous quality improvement.
OOC should develop supports and resources for every stakeholder in the system, aligned to the office-wide definition of quality.
OOC should ensure that funding structures and levels are adequate to support quality.

OOC is committed to continuing to work with stakeholders in Missouri to ensure that the structures and supports are in place to drive continuous quality improvement in early childhood programs across the state.

Scale and Sustain the Quality Assurance Report (QAR)

The primary way OOC operationalizes its definition of quality for child care programs is by scaling and sustaining the QAR, which measures program quality using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) tool and supports programs to improve their quality over time. With support from initial rounds of PDG B-5 and in response to 2016 state legislation calling for a QAR to support continuous quality improvement in early childhood programs, OOC

launched the QAR pilot. The project was expanded in 2023 by enrolling new programs for a total of 500 classrooms. An additional 250 classrooms were added in Fall 2023. Figure 14 shows the number and location of programs participating in QAR.

Figure 14: Programs Enrolled in QAR as of December 2023. (n=199)

	#	%
Number of Programs	199	
Number of Classrooms	689	
Family Child Care	5	2.5%
Small (1-5 classrooms)	143	71.9%
Large (6+ classrooms)	51	25.6%
Region		
North Central	28	4.1%
Northwest	9	1.3%
Northeast	17	2.5%
Kansas City Area	84	12.2%
Central	108	15.7%
St. Louis Area	233	33.8%
Southwest	146	21.2%
Southeast	64	9.3%
Average Child Enrollment Capacity	63	
# of Programs Receiving State Subsidy	111	55.8%
# of Program Receiving Head Start Funding	23	11.6%

Recognizing the need to scale the QAR to accommodate more programs and to sustain this initiative, Missouri began funding QAR with CCDF funds, with the completion of the prior PDG B-5 renewal grant. This will also allow more programs across the state to participate in QAR.

Lessons Learned

The biggest lesson learned to date related to improving program quality has been the change management required for the transition to utilizing the CLASS® tool and efforts to scale quality initiatives. Based on research that indicates that quality adult-child interactions are highly

predictive of child outcomes, OOC piloted the use of CLASS®, which focuses on emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support.

Throughout this process Missouri has learned that the state cannot increase access without also increasing quality. Funding opportunities like MOQPK grants now require participants to participate in QAR to increase quality while also increasing capacity within the state.

Planned Activities

If awarded, Missouri will use this PDG B-5 renewal grant to: 1) expand the QAR to accommodate all programs participating in subgrants (see Activity 6 for more detail); 2) increase the early childhood trainings available to early childhood programs, in alignment to the state's definition of quality; and 3) offer access to expanded social emotional development training.

Expand the QAR

As Missouri works to increase access to early childhood programs and services, OOC aims to ensure that programs participating in OOC initiatives are supported to improve their quality. OOC plans to use PDG B-5 renewal funding to support any new pilots and initiatives the state launches to ensure they are enrolled in QAR. This will ensure that as the state expands access to programs and services, it also requires that providers work to improve the quality of their programs. Additionally, Activity 6 outlines a child care expansion project that would award subgrants to programs in child care desert areas, where grant recipients will participate in QAR. To successfully expand the QAR, OOC will also streamline data reporting by adding data reporting requirements into MOPD as part of the enhancement process the system will undergo (see Activity 4 for more details).

Update the Early Childhood Trainings Available to Professionals

Missouri is committed to enhancing the professional development opportunities available to early childhood professionals across the state. Using PDG B-5 renewal funding, OOC will work to revise and improve the training modules for child development and working with homeless populations, which is also a CCDF training requirement. Recognizing the crucial role these trainings play in delivering high-quality early childhood services, OOC aims to update the content to reflect the latest research and best practices, ensuring it meets the current needs of Missouri's communities. To increase accessibility and encourage widespread participation, these updated trainings will be offered at no-cost through the MOPD system for one year. These trainings are designed to equip Missouri's workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge to support all children effectively, particularly those from vulnerable groups (e.g., children with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, homeless, experiencing trauma or mental health issues), thereby enhancing the overall quality of early childhood education and care provided across the state.

Offer Training on Approaches to Learning and Additional Social Emotional Development Trainings

Early childhood professionals throughout Missouri have elevated the need for supports to help children with challenging behaviors. Using child care relief funds, OOC supported 2,473 providers to attend Conscious Discipline training. OOC aims to build on this participation by hosting a convening for past training participants to support them in creating and implementing their new behavior policies. The convening of trained providers will serve a dual purpose, first it will build a provider's network encouraging collaboration with other providers who may be experiencing similar challenges, and second, at this convening, providers will be able to learn

about best practices on suspensions, expulsions, and exclusionary practices for each type of child care setting. In addition to covering the costs of this convening for providers already trained in Conscious Discipline, OOC also aims to continue to offer this training to additional providers who want information and strategies on working with children who have challenging behaviors.

With PDG B-5 renewal funding, Missouri plans to deliver training on challenging behaviors and Approaches to Learning in response to KEA results from the 2023-24 school year showing that children are scoring low in the Approaches to Learning and Social Emotional domains. This professional development supports the use of positive behavior management strategies and the development of policies that reduces the number of suspensions, expulsions, and other exclusionary practices.

Measurable Outcomes

Success across the three main activities described above will: 1) expand the QAR participation; 2) revise the early childhood trainings available to early childhood programs in alignment with needs identified in the KEA; and 3) offer access to expanded social emotional development training will be measured by:

1. **QAR Participation:** As part of the subgrants in Activity 6, participants awarded a grant will record their QAR enrollment as part of QAR reporting. This list will be reviewed periodically throughout the subgrant period to ensure participation.
2. **Enrollment in Revised Trainings:** OOC will track enrollment in the new early childhood trainings that will be available to programs. With the goal of all enrolled providers completing both trainings in the first year.

3. Enrollment in Social Emotional Training: Providers and professionals who enroll in the Conscious Discipline training and complete the training will be documented in the MOPD system, with the goal of having 100 professionals.

Activity 6: Subaward to Enhance Quality and Expand Access to Programs and Services

Background

Since the creation of OOC, Missouri has made considerable progress toward expanding access to programs and services for families with young children. During the 2023 Legislative Session, the Missouri General Assembly approved significant investments in early childhood, including \$78.5 million to increase child care subsidy rates, \$56 million for pre-K expansion grants to public schools, \$26 million in pre-K expansion grants to community-based child care providers, \$2 million for evidence-based home visiting, and \$1 million funding for collective impact home visiting efforts. In addition to state investments, Missouri spent over \$50 million in federal child care funds to support the start-up and expansion of child care across the state.

Accomplishments

Missouri's most significant accomplishments in 2021-22, are that 309 child care providers received funds to start-up a new child care program, expected to add 13,051 slots, and 145 child care providers received funds to expand their programs which are expected to add 3,971 slots.¹⁷ Additionally, in 2023-24, nearly 100 start-up and expansion grants were awarded to fund licensed child care programs.

Lessons Learned

In recent years, Missouri identified child care supply as one of the key barriers preventing it from achieving its vision that all children have access to the early childhood opportunities that

¹⁷ <https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/2023-office-childhood-accomplishments>

will set them up for success in school and beyond. Investments with child care relief funds have helped the sector significantly, but Missouri continues to have child care desert areas.

Planned Activities

If awarded, Missouri will use this renewal grant funding to: 1) evaluate the effects of the child care relief funded start-up and expansion grants; and 2) use the results from that evaluation to fund a child care supply building pilot in desert areas across the state, which would also be designed to incentivize providers to participate in QAR and to use publicly-funded slots through existing, sustainable funding sources such as child care subsidy and MOQPK.

Evaluate the Impact of Child Care Relief Funds

Missouri plans to use this funding opportunity to closely evaluate the impacts of child care relief funding, specifically the start-up and expansion grants to understand the extent to which those grants effectively improved and sustained child care across the state. Before initiating a new child care supply building pilot, it will be crucial for Missouri to understand the ways in which these activities impacted the child care supply. To conduct this evaluation, OOC will collect data and stakeholder engagement to answer key questions about the impact of the funds. This evaluation will inform the direction of the subgrants awarded for the child care supply building pilot.

Offer a Child Care Supply Building Pilot

Once OOC completes the evaluation described above, it would implement a child care supply building pilot, with the intention of building the supply that can be sustained after the period of grant funding. At a minimum, this child care supply building pilot would award grants to fund the start-up or expansion of child care in desert areas across the state. Recipients of the grant funding would be required to participate in the QAR, apply for MOQPK funds, and apply

to be contracted to take child care subsidy funds for eligible children, in order to sustain programming. This subgrant opportunity will support a range of supply building efforts, including wages to recruit and retain a quality workforce and minor remodeling. These funds would be targeted for child care deserts throughout the state, with the goal of awarding a subgrant to at least one child care program in half of the counties that are deemed child care deserts (e.g., up to 45 awards).

OOC will work closely with childhood community leaders, to identify communities to help recruit child care providers to apply for the grant opportunities. This approach will lay the groundwork to dramatically increase access to and quality of child care across the state.

Measurable Outcomes

Success across the two main activities described above will: 1) evaluate the effects of the child care relief funded start-up and expansion grants; and 2) use the results from that evaluation to fund a child care supply building pilot in desert areas across the state, will be measured by:

1. **Evaluation Report:** OOC will develop and publish a report with information about the evaluation of the effects of the child care relief funded start-up and expansion grants.
2. **Child Care Supply Building Pilot:** OOC will launch and pilot a child care supply building grant program. This pilot will support the start-up and expansion of child care providers in approximately half of the state's desert areas. The number of awarded programs will be tracked as part of the monthly dashboard OOC produces for the PDG B-5 grant, as well as the monthly child care data report that shows the number of licensed, license-exempt, and contracted subsidy programs.

Strengthen ECE Systems

Background

A strong, unified childhood system is essential to supporting working families, ensuring safe environments and healthy child development, and advancing a prosperous economy. In 2021, as a result of PDG B-5, nearly all early childhood programs were consolidated under a uniform governance structure under the OOC. Missouri continues to seek opportunities to better serve children and families through high-quality early childhood programs and services, by building on the incremental successes of the system to date.

Accomplishments

Missouri's most significant accomplishment to date related to strengthening its early childhood system has been the consolidation of programs into OOC and the creation of Missouri's ECIDS.

Consolidation of Early Childhood Governance

In 2021, Governor Mike Parson signed Executive Order 21-02 to create the OOC within DESE. Today, nearly all early childhood programs that were previously administered by three main state agencies: DESE, the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), and the Department of Social Services (DSS), are now administered by OOC. This consolidation effort was made possible by grant opportunities, including the initial PDG B-5 planning and renewal grants, the National Governors Association Prenatal to Age Three, and Zero to Three Building Strong Foundations for Families. These funding opportunities included activities to engage stakeholders and leaders in identifying system fragmentation and develop solutions that would build a more comprehensive childhood system. Figure 15 shows the programs that were consolidated under OOC.

Figure 15: Missouri Early Childhood Programs Consolidated into the Office of Childhood

Program Name	Agency
Home Visiting (School-based Parent Education)	DESE
Part C of IDEA (First Steps)	DESE
Part B/619 of IDEA (Early Childhood Special Education)	DESE
Public Preschool (State-funded)	DESE
Title I Preschool	DESE
Afterschool (21 st Century Community Learning Centers; School Age Community)	DESE
Home Visiting (Community-based)	DHSS
Child Care Licensing	DHSS
Home Visiting (Preventing Abuse/Neglect)	DSS
Child Care Subsidy	DSS
Child Care and Development Fund – Quality Initiatives	DSS

Creation of Missouri's ECIDS

As part of the 2019 PDG B-5 renewal application, Missouri was clear that it needed to create a data system that helped to improve its decision making for early childhood policies and services. Using PDG B-5 funding, Missouri began the creation process for a new ECIDS. The current scope of the ECIDS data collection includes home visiting, First Steps Early Intervention, Public Preschool, and State-funded Early Head Start. OOC is now working to expand use of the ECIDS to include additional programs and services such as parent education, child care subsidy and federally-funded Early Head Start/Head Start. The ECIDS not only helps state teams make decisions; it also makes data publicly available so families, educators, early childhood professionals, and community leaders can have access to information about school readiness indicators that show how well children are prepared to enter kindergarten.

Lessons Learned

Through the unification of early childhood programs and services within OOC, Missouri has garnered invaluable lessons that are critical to strengthening the B-5 system. The integration process highlighted the importance of fostering a cohesive organizational culture that embraces shared goals and collaborative practices. Missouri learned that clear communication channels

and consistent messaging from the state are essential in ensuring that all team members are aligned. This alignment work also elevated the need to continue to reinforce supports for Childhood Community Leaders who are supporting local providers. Moreover, unification highlighted the importance of data integration and the need to streamline systems to improve service delivery and outcomes. This experience will guide Missouri's ongoing efforts to refine and enhance the B-5 system, ensuring they are robust, comprehensive, and equipped to meet the diverse needs of communities.

Planned Activities

Every planned activity proposed as part of this PDG B-5 application seeks to support a unified, strong B-5 system for Missouri. This application has been developed in collaboration with the CCDF administrator and considers the vision for CCDF being laid out in the 2025-27 CCDF state plan. If awarded the PDG B-5 renewal grant, the Missouri PDG B-5 management team will work closely with the CCDF administrative team to ensure lessons learned are shared across teams, data are shared across teams, and that the work conducted under the activities of this grant are able to inform the future planning for CCDF. This alignment is easily obtainable as there are two team members who participate on both the PDG B-5 management and CCDF administrative teams. Figure 16 elevates the key parts of the planned activities written as part of this grant that specifically work to strengthen the ECE system.

Figure 16: Strengthening Missouri's ECE System

PDG Activity	Strengthen Systems
Activity 1	OOC completed work to align the internal Needs Assessment the state conducted for different parts of the B-5 system. OOC now wants to work to align their single Needs Assessment for the B-5 system with the timelines of key state partners such as Head Start.

Activity 2	In an effort to strengthen the B-5 system, OOC will seek to remain focused on the strategic plan created for the state, holding it as the source of truth and vision for all. This will inevitably mean prioritizing the needs of stakeholders and reiterating the vision to ensure all efforts are aligned to it.
Activity 3	Family engagement is a cornerstone for a strong system. The family engagement efforts outlined in this activity are designed to ensure that families have the information and support they need to access high-quality early childhood services. OOC will continue to support regional family leadership activities.
Activity 4	OOC has created a definition of quality for the experience B-5 children should have. Focusing on operationalizing that vision and supporting providers will enhance child outcomes elevating the entire ecosystem of early childhood, ensuring it delivers the best possible start for every child. OOC will continue to support quality through best practices, apprenticeships and scholarship opportunities.
Activity 5	Missouri cannot increase access without also increasing quality. Missouri will expand access to QAR in tandem with any future slots programs so access and quality are both considered when addressing the child care supply.
Activity 6	Piloting a contracts funding model in Missouri will help strengthen the B-5 system through building the supply of care, supporting the business practices of providers, building higher-quality care, and creating a structure for supporting the recruitment and retention of the workforce more directly. OOC will pilot a start-up program that will increase child care supply while supporting programs to access sustainable funding sources.

Bonus Option 1: Increase Workforce Pay and Benefits

Background

Missouri is working to ensure it has a well-supported and well-compensated workforce to achieve its goals of expanding access to high-quality early childhood care and education services. As highlighted in Activity 4, Missouri has made great strides in supporting the early childhood workforce.

Planned Activities

In addition to the activities described in Activity 4, which will support the early childhood workforce, if awarded, Missouri will create and implement a plan to offer the early childhood staff participating in the QAR access to telehealth and telemental health services. Child Care Aware® of Missouri (CCAMO) currently offers early childhood professionals' access to these benefits through a subscription-based model called Show Me Child Care

Resources (SMCCR)¹⁸ that is a collection of shared services via a web portal that is powered by CCA for Social Good. The product is licensed to one entity per state. CCAMO has been the sole source for Missouri and has held the statewide license since 2010. Once a child care program receives a SMCCR annual subscription, all staff gain access to TeleMed/Mental Health coverage. This TeleMed/Mental Health provides health and mental health care to the early childhood teacher, their spouse/domestic partner, and their dependents. This program provides 24/7 access to board-certified doctors who can prescribe medications and provide advice on common illnesses and issues. Prescription discounts are offered through GlicRX and a national network of drugstores and retail outlets. Medical coverage includes 24/7 access and unlimited ‘visits’ and \$0 copay. This immediate access to health care reduces costly visits to Urgent Care and Emergency Rooms for routine illnesses. Telemental health coverage provides up to 10 visits for the teacher and their dependents at \$0 copay during a year.

OOC will leverage PDG B-5 renewal funding to pay for this subscription. This benefit will be made available to early childhood professionals who participate in the QAR project. OOC will conduct a survey of the programs participating in QAR to assess to benefits prior to implementing this initiative to determine the components of this initiative that will most benefit the workforce.

Bonus Option 2: Support Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health

Background

Missouri uses PDG B-5 funding to train early childhood professionals on to administer developmental screening and communicate with parents about screening results, with the goal of increasing the number of children receiving developmental screenings prior to kindergarten.

¹⁸ <https://mochildcareaware.org/smccr-show-me-child-care-resources-6-up-landing-page/>

Missouri uses data from ECIDS to measure the number of children screened each year. While implementing training around the state, Missouri learned that several programs not in ECIDS are performing developmental screening including child care programs and physicians, which means that the number of screenings reported in ECIDS underestimates the number of children receiving developmental screenings in Missouri.

Planned Activities

In addition to the activities described in Activity 3, which will support additional training for developmental screening and social-emotional development, if awarded, Missouri will create and implement a plan to obtain an existing online database that can track the results of developmental screenings for professionals who have been trained in the administration of the ASQ-3. The online system will allow tracking of screener data, including the number of children screened across the state. The online system will interface or batch data into ECIDS, which already has a reporting feature for developmental screenings completed by state funded home visiting program. Access to the online tracking system will only be available to programs outside of state funded home visiting programs so more comprehensive screening data can be reported in an un-duplicated manner. These data will also help the state target resources and training to support the social-emotional development and mental health of children in areas across Missouri.

Project Timeline and Milestones

Missouri developed and implemented an annual cycle to update its needs assessment, strategic plan, and evaluation. Lead by OOC, the state will use various project management processes to document progress toward completing milestones for internal and external reporting purposes.

Figure 17: PDG B-5 Planned Annual Activities

Activities	Quarter	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Activity 1: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment													
Conduct targeted needs assessment activities													
Conduct stakeholder engagement activities to learn about statewide needs													
Activity 2: Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan													
Conduct stakeholder engagement activities to inform objectives and targets for updated strategic plan													
Present final draft of unified strategic plan to the ECSAC													
Continue to strengthen data infrastructure													
Continue stakeholder engagement to refine strategic plan													
Finalize strategic plan and begin implementing action items													
Monitor KEA data to inform early childhood program quality and professional development opportunities													
Activity 3: Maximize Family Participation and Engagement in the B-5 System													
Launch media campaigns promoting quality early childhood programs and services													
Develop a plan for coordinated enrollment													
Engage families at the local level through community leader model													
Define what culturally and linguistically responsive practices are for Missouri's families													
Provide free ASQ®-3 training for all early childhood educators and professionals													
Activity 4: Support the B-5 Workforce													
Expand early childhood apprenticeship slots													
Support providers through leadership and business development trainings													
Create T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI scholarship for public Pre-K teachers													
Incorporate home visitors into MOPD													
Add home visitor training into the MOPD system													
Activity 5: Support Program Quality Improvement													

Expand the QAR for subgrant programs											
Revise and improve MOPD training modules for child development and working with homeless populations											
Host Conscious Discipline convening											
Provide Conscious Discipline training to additional professionals											
Activity 6: Subaward to Enhance Quality and Expand Access to Programs and Services											
Evaluate the effects of the child care relief funding funded start-up and expansion grants											
Use the results from the evaluation to design pilot											
Pilot and scale a statewide child care supply building strategy											
Bonus Option 1: Increase Workforce Pay and Benefits											
Pilot funding for workforce to access telehealth & telemental health benefits											
Bonus Option 2: Support Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health											
Explore and implement a way to collect screening data and ingest into ECIDS											
Use data from developmental screenings to target trainings and resources											

Organizational Capacity

DESE is responsible for the administration and implementation of this PDG B-5 grant.

As the state department of education, DESE has a history of administering, developing, implementing, managing, and evaluating federal and state programs similar in size to the scope and funding of the PDG B-5 renewal grant, including prior PDG B-5 initial and renewal grants. DESE's finance, grants management, and accountability teams will also provide expertise and experience in the successful administration of this grant (see File 2 for more details). OOC will utilize its existing internal PDG B-5 management team to oversee the grant activities, which includes one full-time employee who is responsible for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the project. This full-time employee also works to coordinate with other OOC staff whose work relates to PDG B-5 activities. A full organization chart of OOC can be found in File 2. At a minimum, the OOC PDG B-5 team includes:

- **Pam Thomas**, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Childhood. Pam has over 19 years of experience in various early childhood programs and is responsible for implementing multiple initiatives such as a regional structure of contractors and vendors, pilot projects for child outcomes and early intervention regional team projects as part of the state systemic improvement plan, and strategic planning. She was responsible for coordinating the completion and initial implementation of the PDG B-5 renewal grant. Pam has a Bachelor's degree in psychology, Master's degree in school counseling, and a Doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy analysis. Pam has been with DESE for 17 years.
- **Erin Babb**, Outreach Program Manager, Office of Childhood. Erin has over 12 years of experience in early childhood programs, including parent education and child care. She was part of the DESE team that helped write previous PDG B-5 grant applications. Erin is currently the Program Manager of the Outreach section in the Office of Childhood where she coordinates stakeholder engagement, internal communications, and oversees the PDG B-5 activities. Erin has a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education and a Master's degree in leadership and policy analysis. Erin has been with DESE for 5 years.
- **Lisa Ivy**, CCDF Quality & ECCS Office Administrator, Office of Childhood. Lisa has over 22 years of experience with working with child serving programs at the state level including administering home visiting, early intervention, and quality programs. Lisa holds a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Lisa has been with DESE for 3 years.
- **Bryon Seboldt**, CCDF Administrator, Office of Childhood. Bryon has over 10 years of experience working as an inspector/investigator to ensure compliance with federal and

state regulations, as well as training and supporting staff who conduct these activities.

Most recently, Bryon has led the monitoring activities for child care relief funds to ensure compliance with federal guidance. Bryon holds both a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in Social Work. Bryon has been with DESE for 2 years.

Missouri is well prepared to execute the administration and implementation of the PDG B-5 renewal opportunity. OOC administers the school-based parent education program, Part B/619 of IDEA (Early Childhood Special Education), Part C of IDEA (First Steps), public preschool, Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood and Title V home visiting, child care licensing, child care subsidy, and CCDF funded activities. The initiatives described in this renewal grant will build on the services provided by these programs, thus enhancing and improving Missouri's B-5 mixed delivery system. Furthermore, because OOC administers nearly all state funded early childhood programs in Missouri's mixed delivery system, OOC is well positioned to manage the funding and determine the sustainability of activities after this grant funding ends.

Balance of Unobligated PDG B-5 Funds

As a recipient of a PDG B-5 Planning Grant, OOC has obligated 95% of their funding in contracted services as of July 2024. The unobligated balance of PDG B-5 is \$239,990 which is only 5% of the original \$4,859,999 award.

Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds and Activities

DESE, within the State of Missouri, ensures compliance and proper oversight for federal funds through rigorous policies, plans, and procedures that include internal controls for financial management, property standards, procurement, financial monitoring, sub recipient monitoring, record retention, and remedies for non-compliance.

- DESE's Administrative Manual contains organizational policies established in

accordance with federal and state law and the rules and regulations of the State of Missouri, Office of Administration. The main purpose of this Manual is to explain to staff how these laws and regulations are to be applied within DESE through procedural steps.

- DESE's Internal Control Plan contains processes established in accordance with federal and state law and the rules and regulations of the Office of Administration. The main purpose of this plan is to ensure internal controls are implemented to help safeguard DESE from fraud and abuse, minimize risks, protect assets, ensure accurate records, and promote efficiency.

DESE utilizes the state accounting system called SAMII²⁰ to track all financial transactions. Key Personnel for Financial Management include the Office Assistant Commissioner, Chief Operations Officer, Chief Budget Officer, Office Fiscal Manager, Office Program Manager, Procurement Coordinator, and Accounting Coordinator.

Program Performance Evaluation Plan

Missouri has used the Program Performance Evaluation Plan (PPEP) to guide the evaluation and monitoring of progress related to the PDG B-5 grant, including implementation of the tasks and outcomes of the grant. The PPEP is an effective tool that allows the state to monitor implementation, activity and task completion, and track outputs, outcomes, and progress toward the big goals of Missouri's Childhood Strategic Plan. The PPEP provides the suggested tools and mechanisms for measuring the state's processes and progress toward implementation of the strategic plan, constructs avenues to allow the state to foster continuous improvement, and shares best practices, lessons learned and plans for the future with key stakeholders. It not only includes measures of performance towards the four big goals, but also targets to reach by 2026. Figure 18 identifies the measures and indicators for data collection related to the 2019-2023 PPEP. Targets

and indicators will be adjusted following the creation of a new strategic plan.

Figure 18: Preschool Development Grant Activity Measures and Indicators

Measures	Indicators
Big Goal 1: Expand Access to High-Quality Programs and Services	
Increase the number of children served by the following programs: public preschool, child care subsidy, IDEA Part C (First Steps)	Percent change/growth towards target of children served by the following programs: public preschool, child care subsidy, IDEA Part C (First Steps)
Increase the number of children and families accessing home visiting services	Percent change/growth towards target of children and families accessing home visiting services
Increase the number of children receiving an annual developmental screening	Percent change/growth towards target of children receiving health/developmental screenings
Increase licensed child care providers	Percent change in regulated facilities
Increase licensed child care capacity	Percent change in capacity
Big Goal 2: Improve the Quality of Programs and Services	
Increase the number of sites participating in QAR	Change in number of sites participating in QAR
Increase the QAR quality performance of participating programs	Percent change in CLASS score
Increase the number of home visiting programs participating in quality improvement	Change in number of home visiting programs participating in quality improvement
Big Goal 3: Strengthen Local Leadership	
Increase the percentage of counties with identified Childhood Community Leaders	Percent change in number of counties with identified Childhood Community Leaders
Increase the percentage of Childhood Community Leaders that are implementing a local early childhood plan	Percent change in number of Childhood Community Leaders that have begun to implement a local early childhood plan
Increase the percentage of community stakeholders that indicate Childhood Community Leaders are increasing awareness for early childhood programs	Percent change in pre- and post-surveys of community stakeholders
Increase the percentage of community stakeholders that indicate Childhood Community Leaders are increasing coordination for early childhood programs	Percent change in pre- and post-surveys of community stakeholders
Big Goal 4: Modernize Systems and Improve Operations	
Increase provider satisfaction with the licensing experience	Percent change in pre- and post-survey of providers

Decrease the average processing time for providers to become licensed	Change in the average processing time for licensing providers
Decrease the average processing time for providers to become subsidy eligible	Change in average processing time for providers to become subsidy eligible
Increase the percentage of child care providers in the MOPD	Percent change in number of child care providers in the MOPD

The current strategic plan outlines four big goals along with objectives, strategies, measures, and action steps associated with each goal. Assigned OOC staff, informed by various reporting mechanisms (e.g., ECIDS and MOPD), collect and manage the data needed to inform performance outcomes related to each of the four big goals. OOC coordinates and publishes regular reporting to monitor the state's progress and to identify areas of concern and make adjustments for improvements.

Project Sustainability Plan

In order to maximize the effectiveness of one-time grant opportunities, Missouri must carry out activities that can be maintained through sustainable funding beyond the timeline of the grant itself. For example, this grant provides Missouri the opportunity to make necessary one-time enhancements to its data infrastructure (e.g., ECIDS, MOPD, CCDS), which implementation and use will continue after this grant funding ends. Further, OOC proposes to use this planning grant to expand upon previous efforts to identify and disseminate innovative strategies, especially as it relates to maximizing parent and family engagement, supporting the B-5 workforce, and supporting program quality improvement.

This grant funding will provide Missouri with the opportunity to learn from prior work and research new innovations, ultimately scaling the most effective of these through sustainable funding over time. This grant will be instrumental in Missouri continuing several important initiatives, and OOC is committed to working with stakeholders to sustain these efforts beyond

the scope of the grant. Figure 19 depicts a sustainability plan for the major funding activities proposed in this planning grant application.

Figure 19: Sustainability Plan by Proposed Activity

Proposed Activity	Sustainability Plan for Funding
Activity 1	Update the comprehensive statewide needs assessment in 2025, including stakeholder engagement activities
Activity 2	Update comprehensive B-5 strategic plan in 2026, including monitoring progress against the plan
Activity 3	Promote the importance of quality early childhood programs and services, including coordinated referral and childhood community leaders activities
Activity 4	Increase participation in early childhood workforce development activities, including training, scholarships, and apprenticeships
Activity 5	Increase the early childhood trainings available to early childhood programs, in alignment to the state's definition of quality, including participation in QAR
Activity 6	Fund a child care supply building pilot in desert areas across the state
Bonus Option 1	Pilot funding for workforce to access telehealth and telemental health benefits
Bonus Option 2	Obtain an online system to collect developmental screening information for programs not in ECIDS

Line-item Budget and Budget Narrative

The budget narrative below is for one year of the Preschool Development Grant Renewal funds.

Missouri PDG B-5 Renewal Budget Year 1			
Cost Category	Cost Type	Description	Total Cost
Activity #1 - Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Needs Assessment			

Contractual	PDG	Conduct comprehensive needs assessment activities	\$ 20,000.00
Contractual	PDG	Conduct stakeholder engagement activities	\$ 20,000.00
		Activity Total	\$ 40,000.00
Activity #2 - Update Comprehensive Statewide B-5 Strategic Plan			
Contractual	PDG	Conduct stakeholder engagement and update the strategic plan	\$ 20,000.00
Contractual	PDG	Continue to strengthen data infrastructure	\$ 1,500,000
Contractual	PDG	Monitor progress made on strategic plan (includes funding for PPEP activities)	\$ 20,000.00
		Activity Total	\$ 1,540,000
Activity #3 - Maximize Family Participation and Engagement in the B-5 System			
Contractual	PDG	Promote the importance of quality early childhood programs and services (media campaign)	\$ 100,000.00
Contractual	PDG	Develop System for coordinated enrollment	\$ 20,000
Contractual	PDG	Expand the capacity of Childhood Community Leaders to engage families at the local level	\$ 300,000.00
NA	NA	Develop a definition for culturally and linguistically responsive practices	\$ 0
Contractual	PDG	Increase families receiving developmental screening	\$200,000
		Activity Total	\$ 420,000
Activity #4 - Support the B-5 Workforce			
Contractual	PDG	Increase participation in apprenticeships	\$ 1,000,000
Contractual	PDG	Support providers through sharing best practices for management and leadership	\$ 400,000
Contractual	PDG	Expand T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI scholarships and launch new scholarships for Pre-K teachers and high school students	\$ 1,100,000
Contractual	PDG	Enhance the MOPD system	\$ 150,000
		Activity Total	\$2,650,000
Activity #5 - Support Program Quality Improvements			
Contractual	PDG	Expand the QAR to accommodate subgrant programs, described in Activity 6	\$90,000
Contractual	PDG	Offer training on Approached to Learning and Social Emotional Development	\$1,031,000
		Activity Total	\$1,321,000
Activity #6 - Subaward to Enhance Quality and Expand Access to Programs and Services			
Contractual	PDG	Evaluate the impact of child care relief funds	\$0

Contractual	PDG	Offer a Child Care Supply Building Pilot	\$1,500,000
		Activity Total	
Bonus Option 1 - Increase Workforce Pay and Benefits			
Contractual	PDG	Pilot funding for workforce to access telehealth and telemental health benefits	\$ 400,000.00
Bonus Option 2 - Support Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health			
Contractual	PDG	Obtain an online system to collect developmental screening data from programs not in ECIDS	\$ 20,000.00

Categorical Totals	
Contractual	\$7,891,000
Personnel	\$51,412
Travel	\$15,000
Supplies	\$10,088
Modified Total Direct Costs	\$7,967,500
Indirect	\$32,500
Total	\$8,000,000

Personnel and Benefits

Personnel is allocated for one part-time personnel to assist with grant related activities.

Travel

Travel is allocated for at least 4 persons to travel to Washington DC to attend required meetings.

Equipment

No PDG B-5 funds are allocated for equipment in this grant.

Supplies

Supplies are allocated to support the cost of supplies for the OOC team members working on PDG B-5 activities.

Indirect Costs

DESE has a negotiated indirect rate with the U.S. Department of Education. The restricted rate is 4.5% and the unrestricted rate is 8.1%. The restricted rate will be applied to administrative direct expenses and contracts up to \$25,000. Vendors will be allowed to claim up to 10% for contracted services and activities.

Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

DESE will use \$2,400,000.00 of state funds used for preschool aged children in local education agencies for the required matching funds in each budget period. DESE will meet the match by the end of each 12-month budget period.

Stakeholder Engagement

Missouri is deeply committed to stakeholder engagement activities and has worked to create a meaningful stakeholder engagement process to ensure the voices and experiences of stakeholders – especially providers, families, and historically underrepresented perspectives – are represented in decision-making.

As described in Activity 1, Missouri partnered with The Hunt Institute in 2021 to host a series of stakeholder engagement events. During this process of in-depth stakeholder engagement, Missouri received input and feedback from more than 100 stakeholder engagement events, received almost 600 survey responses, and hosted 26 in-person and virtual listening sessions. Through these events, the state was able to reach families, providers (including those from rural areas), early childhood professionals, and representatives of historically marginalized groups (e.g., English language learners, children with disabilities). Key takeaways from these events resulted in the following stakeholder engagement priorities for OOC: 1) active communication and relationship building; 2) collaborative decision-making; 3) family voice, engagement, and leaders; 4) diversity, inclusion, and equity of engagement; and 5) continuous and consistent communication of decisions and outcomes (i.e., “closing the loop”). These priorities are used to guide all ongoing and continuous stakeholder engagement.

Across all of these contexts, OOC has been able to gather feedback from various perspectives in the system (e.g., parents, providers, trainers) and across programs representing

the mixed delivery system as well as healthcare professionals (e.g., pediatricians, licensed therapists). The figures below are not exhaustive but offer a representation of stakeholders who have been engaged throughout this process. As OOC works to update the comprehensive needs assessment and strategic plan in 2025 and 2026 respectively, the office will prioritize stakeholder engagement to ensure that key early childhood stakeholders have opportunities to provide feedback and insight (see Activity 2 for more detail).

Figure 19: Childhood Strategic Plan Committee

Mr. Craig Stevenson, Parent	Ms. Brenda Shields, House of Representatives
Ms. Emily van Schenkhof, Children's Trust Fund	Ms. Robin Philips, Child Care Aware of Missouri
Dr. Pam Thomas, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	Ms. Stacey Owsley Wright, State Director of Missouri Head Start
Ms. Deidre Anderson, Child Care Provider	Ms. Terri Foulkes, Missouri Afterschool Network
Ms. Linda Rallo, Aligned	Ms. Pamela Speer, Missouri Accreditation of Programs for Family and Youth
Sister Anne Francioni, Whole Kids Outreach	Ms. Debbie George, Child Care Provider
Ms. Melissa Klocke, School District	Ms. Carolyn Chrisman, Economic Development
Mr. Wilford Pinkney, City of Saint Louis	Ms. Sara Could, Child Care Provider

Figure 20: Early Childhood State Advisory Council (ECSAC)

Dr. Pam Thomas, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education	Ms. Pamela M. Clark, Early Care and Education Provider
Ms. Teri L. Armistead, Missouri Department of Social Services	Ms. Tera Bock, Office of the Coordination of Education of Homeless Children and Youth
Ms. Melody A. Boling, Missouri Department of Mental Health	Ms. Clara Wilson, First Steps Provider
Ms. Amy Liston, Missouri Department of Commerce and Insurance	Ms. Laura Farley, First Steps Provider
Ms. Stacey Owsley Wright, State Director of Missouri Head Start	Dr. Tracy Stroud, First Steps Provider